DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 259 CG 012 297

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TITLE The Potential of Information: Guidance and Counselling Services for Improving the Access of Adults to Learning Opportunities.
PUB DATE May 77
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the International Symposium on Ways and Means of Strengthening Information and Counselling Services for Adult Learners (Los Angeles, California, May 22-27, 1977). Appendices not filmed due to copyright

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Counseling; *Adult Education; Counseling Services; *Educational Counseling; *Educational Opportunities; Guidance Counseling; *Guidance Services; *Information Dissemination; Information Services; State of the Art Reviews

ABSTRACT

Well-developed information and counseling services not only afford immediate assistance to adult learners, but also generate a significant feedback effect on many other components of the overall system and thus make a considerable contribution to the overall development of adult education. Access to learning and progress in learning should be like the roots of a plant branching out in all directions and providing a multitude of entries into the main-stream of growth and development. Schools and higher education institutions play a role in providing guidance to people who are leaving the formal system of education, whether indefinitely or only temporarily. There are implications in terms of personnel and the training of personnel for counseling services. Some of the organizational administrative and financial aspects of information, guidance and counseling services are outlined. An attempt is made to outline some proposals for action at various levels. (Author/LEB)

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ED149259

THE POTENTIAL OF INFORMATION, GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR IMPROVING THE ACCESS OF ADULTS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

a discussion paper

prepared by

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for

THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WAYS AND MEANS OF STRENGTHENING INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR ADULT LEARNERS

held by

THE COLLEGE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

in co-operation with

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Los Angeles, 22-27 May 1977

CG012292

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Unesco's concern

Unesco's concern for the development of information, guidance and counselling services for actual and potential adult learners has its roots in the decisions of the General Conference, to make the realization of life-long education and learning the guiding principle for its educational action.

This principle implies that children and young people should be intellectually and morally prepared to continue learning as long as they live, and that adults, whether they have been prepared for further education through schooling or not should have access to education appropriate to their interests or needs at any stage of life.

While the options confronting the child and its parents at the time of initial schooling are strictly limited, the learning opportunities, formal and non-formal become more diverse as life unfolds, and for the adult it is not only difficult to choose; under present conditions it is even a problem to get information about the very opportunities that exist.

In order to secure equal and democratic access to education for people in the same age group, and for people belonging to different age groups, a large number of social measures will have to be taken in most, or all countries. However, this paper is limited to a discussion of the contribution which information, guidance and counselling services can make first to improve the access of adults to education, and secondly to help them overcome the obstacles they encounter in the pursuit of the learning tasks they have set themselves.

Terminology

The terminology in this area of relatively new concern to adult education is not as yet either clear or agreed. In this paper the term "information" is used to mean information about what learning opportunities are available and what conditions, if any, are prerequisite to benefiting from them. The term "guidance" (in French "orientation") is used to imply assistance in making educational choices. The term as here applied in no way implies an external sanction or a kind of paternalistic directive. It is rather an expression of the alternatives related to the situation of the learner as emerging from a dialogue, which enables him or her to make his own decisions in as full knowledge of the factors at play as possible. "Counselling" (in French "guidance") is here taken to mean the response, again emerging after dialogue, to problems encountered

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in pursuing a chosen course of action. It is realized that it may at times be difficult to define the borderline between this kind of counselling and therapeutic counselling. Although very important, the latter is outside the scope of this paper.

Scope of the present paper

After a brief overall review of the present provision for information and counselling, this paper sets out to place this provision within the overall context of adult education. The argument advanced is that well developed information and counselling services not only afford immediate assistance to adult learners, but also generate a significant feedback effect on many other components of the overall system and thus make a considerable contribution to the overall development of adult education.

The following section argues that information concerning learning opportunities for adults and counselling related to adult learning should not be treated in isolation from other civic information or counselling services, but on the contrary, in the same way as adult learning is interwoven with life in all its aspects and with all its problems, so access to learning and progress in learning should be like the roots of a plant branching out in all directions and providing a multitude of entries into the main-stream of growth and development.

Next comes a section on the role of schools and higher education institutions in providing guidance to people who are leaving the formal system of education whether indefinitely or only temporarily.

A brief section on the implications in terms of personnel and the training of personnel for counselling services are then followed by a section outlining some of the organizational administrative and financial aspects of information, guidance and counselling services. Finally, as a basis for discussion, an attempt is made to outline some proposals for action at various levels. The psychological aspects of guidance and counselling and the relation between the counsellor and the learner are left aside as there is already a considerable literature dealing with these questions.

Annex 1 contains a recent statement by the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, published in its Vol. I of its General Report on Learning Opportunities for Adults, Paris 1977.

Annex 2 contains the section on Guidance/Counselling contained in the Document of the Council of Europe on "Organization, Content and Methods of Adult Education", Strasbourg 1977.

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II. PRESENT PROVISION

While in practice information and counselling services are often interconnected, it is possible and also desirable to distinguish the function of providing information from those of providing guidance and counselling. Most information about organized learning opportunities emanate from the agencies that offer them, and for the agencies there is sometimes a tendency to confuse the provision of information with recruitment efforts - what is sometimes termed "marketing".

Nature of the problem

In a small cohesive society - say a traditional village - there may be few opportunities to participate in organized learning processes, but everybody knows more or less what these opportunities are. In a large and more complex society - say a big city - there are very many more opportunities to learn, but it is very difficult even to get information about what is going on, let alone advice about what would be relevant to one's needs, interests, background, etc.

Even those who start with a good deal of education often have difficulties in finding what they want, but the problem is particularly acute for the least educated, for newcomers to a community and for people with particular handicaps. Indeed, it is often claimed that those who are most in need of education have the greatest difficulty in getting it.

The need for widely accessible information about learning opportunities and access to guidance is already obvious, but there is no doubt that this need will increase as both learning needs and opportunities to learn multiply not only as regards subject-matter or content, but also as regards ways of learning.

Modern media have led to the introduction of new learning techniques and greatly facilitate individual self-directed learning. But if these techniques are to be utilized to the full, it is not enough that they exist somewhere. It must be possible for the individual learner to have ready access to the different materials he requires - be it books, tapes, kits, images or other learning materials.

It therefore becomes both essential to develop mechanisms that permit articulated and latent demands for learning to be met in the first place by making fuller use of existing opportunities and in the second place by the creation of further opportunities to learn.

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Information

The information - or publicity - takes many forms: posters, duplicated and printed leaflets, more or less systematically diffused advertisements in the general press and magazines addressed to particular target-audiences, texts of a descriptive and/or persuasive nature inserted in the press, radio and T.V. Relatively few agencies are able to employ these techniques on anywhere near the scale used for the marketing of commercial products, and while some publicity is of a high technical standard, much could undoubtedly be improved.

There is general agreement that personal contacts play a very large role in publicity and recruitment, but even so, it would usually appear to be a matter of complementarity rather than of alternatives.

The Swedish FOVUX experiments in outreach, which entail using large numbers of canvassers from the peer-groups of the potential learners, have shown remarkable results, but here we are already in an area where counselling supplements the information process.

Information which is coupled with encouragement from accepted opinion-leaders has proved doubly effective. Lalage Bown cites a case from Nigeria related to health education in which a Mass Media campaign led to disappointing results, while a subsequent explanation furnished to the Chief of the Community leading to his transmission of the message through traditional channels of communication produced spectacular results. It is well known that religious communities, political parties and trade unions can do a great deal to encourage - or discourage - participation of their members in educational programmes.

Special mention should be made of information which is particularly directed to intermediaries between the agencies and the learners, eg. to voluntary associations, social workers and employers. Such communications are likely to increase because there will be too many offers to convey directly to the public at large.

Finally, mention must be made of information services that do not form part of a particular adult education agency, but which is exclusively devoted to the supply of information, possibly combined with at least some guidance and counselling. A particularly noteworthy case is Metrodoc, Toronto, Canada which maintains a computer file of all learning opportunities signalled in Toronto (over 80,000) of which printed catalogues are available in all public libraries of the city. On a minor scale interesting experiments with "learning exchanges" are in progress in Australia and New Zealand and no doubt elsewhere. The basic idea is to mobilize all available learning resources of the community including individual offers of sharing knowledge and experience in any field of interest.

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In some countries, for example, Libya and the Sudan, the adoption of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) has led to a comprehensive mapping out of adult learning opportunities, which provide a ready basis for the institution of information services for adult learners.

Comprehensive information services will be more and more needed, particularly in large urban centres, both to serve individual requests for information and to marshal the information that will be needed as a basis for the development of counselling services.

Guidance and counselling by adult education agencies

Present provision for guidance and counselling is even more inadequate. Most frequently guidance and counselling have usually developed as a more or less conscious adjunct of other activities.

a) linked with the teaching process

Familiar to all adult educators is the teacher who arrives before the class and remains behind after the class to be available to learners who want to discuss individual questions. Often these discussions develop into counselling sessions. Counselling will also occur during the course itself, and becomes thus an integral part of the teaching-learning process. A good deal of peer-group counselling may also go on between the learners, also outside the course;

b) linked with enrollment procedures

Counselling in connection with enrollment is also fairly frequent, but many adult agencies leave this process to be dealt with either by post or by clerical staff who may or may not be in a position to offer much advice. At enrollment sessions in the Institute of Adult Education, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; there is a tradition that full-time teachers should be present and not only advise on admission to Institute courses but, where appropriate, make potential learners aware of relevant learning opportunities offered by other adult education agencies in the city, thereby providing a referral service.

c) permanent guidance and counselling services

From counselling interwoven with course participation and counselling connected with enrollment, it is only a step to counselling services run in permanence by adult education agencies, either by teaching staff or by special counsellors. Such provision is most common where learners have to make choices that engage them for a long time, and where they undertake studies leading to recognised qualifications, whether sought in the pursuance of a career or for other purposes.

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d) specialized comprehensive centres

Surprisingly enough the institutions whose main raison d'être is to provide guidance and counselling to actual and potential learners are very rare, especially outside North America. In Europe, the leading example is probably the Bildungsberatungs Zenter (Educational Advise Centre) in Cologne, Federal Republic of Germany, and also in France and Northern Ireland specialized comprehensive information, guidance and counselling services are in operation.

Guidance and counselling provided by other agencies

Much educational counselling is also provided by agencies, services, associations, etc., whose primary purpose is not educational. They cannot all be listed here. Among the most significant are the following :

a) counselling linked with employment

Employment exchanges increasingly provide information about opportunities for vocational training and either counselling or referral to counselling to those interested. Similar functions are performed by trade testing centres, which not only test and grade craftsmen, but refer those who want to qualify for a higher grade to an appropriate training course. Often though, there appears to be a gap in the provision between opportunities for vocational training and the opportunities to obtain the kind of general education needed to get access to and benefit from the vocational training opportunities. This gap is, however, not only due to inadequate counselling but also to lack of the necessary learning opportunities.

Enterprises, particularly the large ones with well developed personnel services, often offer counselling about learning opportunities provided both by the firm and outside the firm.

Trade Unions are sometimes associated with this service, but in addition, they often provide their own counselling in respect of vocational training or trade union education or other forms of education.

b) counselling as a function of the social services

While this counselling naturally has to be directed to overcoming the immediate problem that has led to counselling, it is often found either that some educational deficiency is amongst the causes of the problem. Social workers therefore often become involved in counselling related to adult education. The extent to which they are equipped to deal with educational counselling varies greatly. Sometimes, an appropriate referral can go a long way to solve the problem.

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c) counselling in the context of medical services is most obviously in relation to health education but also in connection with the rehabilitation of people who, because of injury or illness, have to acquire new knowledge and skills. Such cases may be difficult when a sufficient basis of general education is lacking, but there are also successes. A French building worker who had to leave his trade because of rheumatism was, through a series of tests, found to be exceptionally intelligent. A suitable course of training was identified and he is now a foreman in charge of 60 people. The doctor who reported this case raised the question of what would have happened to this worker if rheumatism had not led him to educational counselling!

d) Libraries are often sought out by learners as centres of information and educational counselling and many librarians find the opportunity to provide this kind of help to their clients most rewarding.

e) Last but not least, voluntary associations of many kinds implicitly and explicitly provide counselling services for their members and encourage their participation in educational activities both those organized by the association itself and those organized by other agencies sometimes at the specific request of a voluntary association. Also voluntary associations are often instrumental in the selection of participants for residential courses and some also provide economic support or help to obtain study grants.

III. INFORMATION GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN RELATION TO OTHER MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE OVERALL ADULT EDUCATION STRUCTURE

While information, guidance and counselling services are instituted in order to provide a direct service to actual and potential learners, we should not lose sight of their place in the overall adult education structure, or system. Their effect on some major components of the system will be explored below.

Evaluation and programme development

Counselling can provide important feedback to evaluation and programme development. Learner reactions both to what is offered and what is missed, become apparent to the counsellors. The trend is already moving towards greater learner-involvement in evaluation - participatory evaluation. Feedback from counselling can provide useful contributions to this kind of evaluation and subsequent programme improvement.

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This is easily done when counselling is carried on within an educational institution. When counselling is organized as an independent service, it is necessary to make particular arrangements for the transmission of knowledge gained through counselling to the points in the system where decisions are taken about programme development.

Materials, methods and media

Learner reactions to materials, methods and media are, to some extent, collected through the regular process of teaching, but an increasing amount of learning takes place outside a classroom situation in the form of independent, self-directed learning, and here it is more difficult to ascertain the reaction of learners.

Where learners engaged on individual learning projects also have access to counsellors, it becomes possible to obtain a wider range of reactions, materials, methods and techniques.

Adult education journals already publish reviews of printed texts, and one can expect that an increasing number of reviews of audio and video documents will appear. In line with the development of consumer information, one may hope that adult learners will get increasing access to systematic information and advice about "prepackaged" learning materials. Such information would certainly have a feedback effect on the producers.

Policy and planning

Information and counselling services are not limited to dealing with particular learning opportunities but to catering for the public at large. They are well placed therefore, to perform a kind of market research function. By registering demand for various learning opportunities, comprehensive advisory services can develop an awareness of gaps in the provision and also an insight into possible overlapping and duplication.

Knowledge is also uncovered about social factors that affect successful access to learning, whether these factors are related to economic obstacles, time and transport constraints or the need to make arrangements for looking after children, etc.

In practice, there are often stated or unstated prerequisites of certain attainments for effective access to a course of learning.

For the democratization of education and the development of life-long education and learning, it is important to identify such obstacles to the passage of learners from one level of education to another (vertical mobility) and also to the horizontal mobility between different educational paths, eg. general education and vocational training so that the necessary "ladders" and bridges can be constructed in the form of preparatory or intermediate courses, guidance and counselling can certainly help in the process of identification.

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Furthermore, educational counselling can bring out significant information about the reactions of youths and adults to their previous learning experiences in school and out-of-school. The feedback from adult counselling is thus not only relevant to the planning of adult education, but can also provide valuable insights into the workings of the formal system of education.

Training and personnel

Questions related to the training of personnel engaged in guidance and counselling will be discussed in a subsequent section, but counselling is of relevance to all teachers of adults as there should be an element of counselling implicit in nearly all teaching. It has been said that a good teacher needs to know his subject, be familiar with a range of methods so that he can select the most appropriate one, and above all know the people he is teaching - his target audience. In the medical profession it is second nature to make a diagnosis before commencing a treatment, but in education it is far too common to proceed straight to teaching without assessment of the background, needs, interests, etc., of the learner.

The conscious development of counselling, both as an integral part of teaching and as a distinct function can help to develop a more diagnostic learner-centred approach to teaching, and thus make teaching more closely related to the situation of the learners. Experienced counsellors should participate in the training of teachers and other adult education personnel, so that teachers can develop the counselling dimension of this work, and be helped to shift the emphasis from teaching to learning.

To sum up: if the above argumentation holds true it will readily be seen that information, guidance and counselling services should not be regarded as a side-line, but as a central part of the overall provision for adult education. These services constitute as it were, the market-mechanism of adult education as they help to adjust the supply of learning opportunities to the demand for learning.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING AND OTHER COUNSELLING

While undoubtedly some adults seek education and learning for their own sake, the potential learner generally starts off with other concerns such as looking for a job or for career advancement, wishing to solve some problems affecting his family or to take a more active part in public affairs, or pursuing some leisure interests.

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The motivation to learn develops from a multitude of concerns and functions or life-roles. Often it is very hard for a potential learner to find an answer to his needs and it may not enter his mind at all that there might be a learning path to the solution of the problem encountered.

When counselling is sought outside the peer-group it is therefore quite likely that the person will turn for advice to an employment agency, a social service or a voluntary association rather than to an adult education agency.

The adult learner - and even more so the potential learner is often aware - or actively in doubt - about his own capacity for further learning and development. This is particularly the case of the many who have acquired most of their knowledge and skill in informal ways and who have great difficulties in comparing their educational background or potential with those who have had an extensive formal education.

If adult education is to be "out there" where people are up against problems and reach those who have not spontaneously realized that an appropriate learning experience can at least contribute to solving the problem encountered, it becomes important for adult education agencies to work with and through all the various counselling services in the community.

In times of rapid economic change, whether in the direction of development and expansion or in the direction of recession and contraction of some industries, employment-related counselling services are particularly important both for individual and for social reasons. Nobody would claim that general and vocational education and counselling related thereto would bring an economic crisis to an end, but the greater the occupational mobility, the less will be the incidence of unemployment. There can be no doubt that the Swedish Labour-Market Oriented Education scheme, which involves a considerable amount of counselling related to careers and education, has had a significant effect in keeping unemployment at a relatively low level.

It is a common observation that the various counselling services often function in partial or even complete isolation from one another.

To bring about increased exchanges of information and experience between them could be an important task for local adult education committees. Where a comprehensive adult education information and guidance service exists it can do a great deal to advance local co-operation and particularly assist the more specialized services by making information material available and by arranging briefing and training sessions.

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V. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

The role of the school

If earlier on there was an almost irrevocable choice for the school-leaver between continuing full-time education at a higher level or seeking employment, there are now more opportunities for returning to education on a part-time or even a full-time basis.

In the many countries where constraints on the formal system of education as yet make it impossible for more than a fraction of the pupils to go from primary to secondary education or from secondary to higher education, the school and the teacher can provide a very valuable service by informing the leavers about whatever opportunities there are for continuing their education in non-formal ways, and encouraging them to make use of these opportunities. This can also do much to help the leavers overcome the sense of failure which they often experience.

As education increasingly becomes recurrent, as barriers between formal and non-formal education diminish, and as the opportunities for life-long learning multiply, school-based counselling services everywhere will have to assume a larger role in helping pupils and their parents choose between continuous full-time education or some combination of education and work - perhaps with a view to returning to full-time education at a later stage.

School-based counselling services will thus have to become increasingly concerned with the full spectrum of education.

In some countries, for example, in the United Republic of Tanzania, the school has already changed from being a place exclusively for the education of children, to being a focal point for the education of the whole community. In addition to courses taught by school teachers, lectures and discussions animated by extension agents from various ministries and by community leaders are held at school premises. The school also serves as a distribution point for literacy materials and other educational supplies. Often there is also a small public library branch at the school, which is generally developing as the educational contact-centre of the community.

The developing countries which are usually very short of infra-structures for the development of adult education, the engagement of the school-system in adult education presents a relatively economic solution which also has the advantage of bringing the school closer to the life of the community. In Tanzania, the involvement of parents in school-based adult education activities has considerably strengthened the interest of parents in the education of their children, and curriculum-reform has been greatly facilitated. Everywhere the school teacher is called upon for educational advice, but clearly his role as a counsellor is enhanced in an integrated system.

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Higher education

In higher education there has, in recent years, been a clear trend towards a diversification of the student-body. The age-spread and the mean age have increased and students entering university come from a wider range of backgrounds bringing with them more varied experienced.

Study options in higher education have also multiplied.

The conjuncture of these developments leads to a greater need for information and counselling in higher education, and as the universities and other institutions of higher education open themselves to the whole community, it is increasingly realistic to expect that university counselling services, at least in a fairly large number of cases, will widen their scope to cater, certainly for adults, who are part-time university students, but probably also to adults who are pursuing other learning.

It is probably that, as the life-long learning society develops, a new type of relationship, in some ways comparable with the one people have with a medical doctor or a lawyer, may develop between a university and its graduates. When the need arises the graduate would come back for a consultation about his or her present learning problems.

Adult education agencies, and more particularly the more comprehensive adult education information, guidance and counselling services, will need to supply school and university based counselling services with information material about opportunities in non-formal education and develop a referral system between these complementary kinds of counselling services.

VI. PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

The main categories of personnel required for counselling adult learners are first, full-time professional counsellors, specialized in adult education counselling. Secondly, professional counsellors not specialized in the education of adults, but including educational counselling in their professional activity. Thirdly, professional adult educators who engage in counselling as part of their teaching or administrative work. Fourthly, the large diversified group of people who may be employed on a part-time basis, or who may be voluntary unpaid workers active within their peer-groups, at their place of work, in their neighbourhood or in associations to which they belong.

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There is little point in arguing the relative merits of these four categories. Their functions are complementary and they are all needed. It should perhaps be stressed that in countries that do not dispose of sufficient professional counsellors it is not only possible but desirable to develop information, guidance and counselling services by making use of personnel belonging to the latter two categories. The work is urgent and experience will be built up as it proceeds.

There is a good case for including at least some element of counselling theory and method in adult education training courses because all teachers of adults are likely to be involved in some counselling. Where professional counsellors are available they should be invited to participate in the training. In the career development of professional adult educators a period spent in counselling activities would most likely constitute a very fruitful element.

In the professional training of counsellors for other fields than adult education there is also a case for including some knowledge of how adults learn and some orientation about the opportunities for adult education in the country or locality.

For the diversified groups of people who are part-timers and in many cases unpaid volunteers at least initial training may rather take the form of briefing sessions. Personal suitability and character matter greatly and care must be taken over recruitment, especially to ensure that guidance does not become directive.

While it cannot be desirable to have a "closed shop" of adult education counsellors, there is everything to be gained from professional development of this field and interdisciplinary co-operation between the counselling profession and the adult education profession. In this way, validated knowledge and experience can be developed and made available to back-up the non-professional counsellors who may well do the bulk of the work, but who can be more effective when they are backed up by professionals and a supply of information materials.

Perhaps it should be noted that counselling is not necessarily a field in which people should spend their whole professional career. There is a good case for arranging for mid-career entry into this kind of work, which demands considerable commitment and experience of life.

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VII. ORGANIZATIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Organizations

As guidance and counselling services must above all be readily accessible and close to the learners and their concerns, there will not only be room for, but also need for a large number of services. At the same time, it is highly desirable to secure interaction and co-operation between the various guidance and counselling services in the locality. Nobody can know everything, so there is a need for reference to other services. The establishment of inventories of learning opportunities, briefing and training arrangements, joint publicity and recruitment campaigns are also tasks for common action.

One of the organizational problems will be to bring information services out to small communities and scattered populations, particularly in rural areas. Such structures as exist will have to be utilized: the school system, the radio, co-operative societies, and other organizations that reach out to the people. Market towns may also provide a base for serving rural areas.

However, the greatest need for information and guidance is where the 'market for learning' is least transparent, namely in the cities. Here there is also the best scope for the development of inter-agency co-operation and the establishment of training and other common services.

There is also a need for visibility. In large cities this means that central and easily noticed premises preferably with show-windows like a shop have to be secured or there has to be sufficient publicity to make everybody aware where information and guidance is available. The first reception given to newcomers is of great importance.

In many countries there may be a case for setting up at least one comprehensive information, guidance and counselling centre specially devoted to adult education, which should function in a way that can be compared to a university teaching hospital, which is a place for the treatment of patients, the training of staff and the conduct of research. Here the functions would be to provide a wide range of information, guidance and counselling services to the public at large as well as back-up services to smaller counselling services, to train practitioners, and to undertake research and experimental work and consciously develop the feedback mechanisms.

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Administration

Central administration of all information, guidance and counselling services can be ruled out, because of the variety of the services and their different applications. This is not exceptional in adult education - on the contrary, the tradition is a plurality of provision with different administrative patterns. The experience of many countries has however led to the development of organs of co-ordination or harmonization, sometimes firmly based in one ministry of government, most frequently the Ministry of Education, sometimes of a non-statutory nature even if several ministries participate alongside voluntary organizations. No prescription can be made. The public interest is clearly to ensure that the various information, guidance and counselling services among them cover all areas of adult learning and that there is sufficient referral and other co-operation between them to secure overall effectiveness. How this is done will depend on national patterns of administration and the degree of general development of adult education.

Economic and financial aspects

The major expenses involved in the running of information, guidance and counselling services are the salaries of full-time professional personnel. Counselling is a labour-intensive activity, and if undertaken by paid staff the salary bill can easily become quite considerable.

Other expenses will be occurred on part-time personnel, premises, information gathering and processing, and on the production and diffusion of information material.

The expenses will be easily identifiable. On the other hand, the benefits will be rather widely spread, and not so easily translated into monetary terms. However, on a little reflection, the credit side is impressive. First, it must be borne in mind that education is costly, both in terms of direct monetary cost, but even more in terms of learners' time. Everyone connected with adult education knows about the enormous waste that occurs because people have not found the learning experience that corresponds best to their needs and wishes. It can be argued that the real costs of this alone outweighs the cost of even elaborate counselling services.

The backwash or feedback effect on evaluation, programming, materials, planning and personnel development, in short, on the overall development of adult education must also be taken into account. It is impossible to quantify, but with the present volume of adult education, it is bound to be considerable.

It is also realistic to take into account savings on social service expenditure of various kinds. Helping people to become self-reliant through appropriate educational experiences costs far less to society than keeping them on welfare, perhaps indefinitely.

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Even if expensive in monetary terms, it would thus appear that counselling services are a worthwhile social investment in human development.

In practice, it will be necessary to spread the costs over different budgets - adult education agencies, employment services and enterprises, various social services, etc. In the final analysis, the bulk will probably have to come from local and central government, but as already mentioned, compensatory savings can be expected under other headings, and the overall productivity or efficiency of educational expenditure can be expected to increase.

The real constraints on the growth-rate of information, guidance and counselling services will be the development of personnel experience, and organization, which all takes time and it would be desirable that the rate of growth allowed by these factors should not be slowed down by lack of finance.

VIII. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

It is the first time that an international meeting has been convened to deal with the question of information, guidance and counselling services in adult education. "The lack of discussion of the counselling and information-giving function in many overviews raises the suspicion that insufficient attention has been paid to this activity because its importance has been (and still is) seriously underestimated". (*).

As the field is relatively new the suggestions that follow are of a very tentative nature.

National action

First, it would appear that the question has to be put on national agendas. In a large number of countries there is now a national council or a board of adult education with representatives from the relevant government ministries and the principal agencies and voluntary associations that carry the main responsibility for adult education. This is an appropriate forum for initial discussion and for drawing up proposals for national action within the political, social and educational framework of each country. National councils can also secure public recognition of the value of information, guidance and counselling services.

(*) Diana Ironside and Dorene E. Jacobs: Trends in Counselling and Information Services for the Adult Learner, Toronto, Ontario; Institute for Studies in Education, 1977 p. VII

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It may well be that one of the first tasks will be to map out what services are already in existence, how they operate and the problems they encounter. Such surveys should not be confined to services operated by adult education agencies. Representatives from the counselling profession should be involved from the beginning and all information and counselling services that are even indirectly concerned with adult learning should be included.

The material gathered would not only serve as a basis for the elaboration of plans for the future. Immediately the material can be useful for the compilation of a national directory of adult education providing information on existing opportunities for learning.

It may well be found that the initial efforts should be directed towards the development of information. In this area there is not the same need for a time-lag for staff development as for counselling services, and in any case, a solid base of information is needed for guidance and counselling.

While the information services are being built up it might be found useful to conduct some case-studies of existing counselling services to see what lessons can be derived from their experience. This material will probably bring to light many valuable experiences already made here and there on a small scale and provide useful background not only for the elaboration of policies, but also for the training of practitioners.

Local action

Action at the local level can also start in a modest way. Where patterns of co-operation and mutual support between the various agencies have been developed, it should be easy to develop referral services and to arrange for joint publicity and information - perhaps initially concentrated on an annual "enrollment week", which for several reasons might coincide with the beginning of the school or academic year. People already embarked on adult learning maybe encouraged to undertake out-reach work within their peer-groups and to report the reaction of their peers to the agencies. Teachers of adults may also immediately be briefed to make room for counselling as part of their teaching activities.

The need for a comprehensive mapping-out of existing provision will also be felt at the local level, and action on this may trigger off the establishment of a local adult education committee where they do not already exist. National agencies, and especially the national co-ordinating body may be able to assist local agencies by making consultancy services available to help develop local information and counselling services.

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Regional and international action

At the regional and international levels, there is a need for regional and international adult education associations to take action by promotion of comparative studies, by placing the matter on the agenda of meetings. The International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling has already decided to arrange a working group on counselling and guidance in Adult Education as part of its Eighth International Conference and Seminar of Counselling to be held at Oslo 2 July - 6 July, 1978.

There is perhaps also a role to be discharged by Unesco in the context of its general mandate to work for the promotion and intensification of adult education. Unesco's future action might include the diffusion of case-studies perhaps also assistance in their preparation, and the supply of consultants to countries that feel the need for international co-operation in this area. Unesco would also be able to establish contacts between agencies or countries who wish to share their experience in this matter with others. 'Adult Education Information Notes' can be used as a contact-organ, and periodicals like 'Prospects in Education' can publish more substantial articles on the subject. Already the Unesco Institute for Education, Hamburg, has decided to devote an issue of its International Review of Education on the subject.

However useful international exchanges may be, it is however, quite evident that action must above all be developed at national and local levels. The more so because we are here dealing with services which address themselves to individual men and women and which must meet them and their concerns wherever they are.